Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on May 23, 2014

“Importance, Objectives and Merits of Dawah”

It is an established fact that dawah is a religious obligation incumbent upon all able mukallaf, (responsible Muslims, males and females alike). Dawah is a means to end. Fulfilling a religious obligation brings pleasure to Allah (SWT) and with the proper intention one may reap the many blessings from Allah (SWT) in both worlds.

The work of dawah is very extensive and prophetic in nature. The message of dawah is plain and simple, “there is no god except Allah.” Allah (SWT) informed Prophet Muhammad (SAW), ‘Not a messenger did We send before you, (O Prophet) without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me” (al-Anbiya’, 21:25). A similar ayah expresses the same message with the proclamation to avoid false gods, “We sent a messenger to every community, (with the command), ‘Worship Allah and shun false gods’” (al-Nahl, 16:36).

“O my people! Worship Allah, you have no other gods besides Him” (al-A’raf, 7:59, 65, 73, 85). That was precisely the call of the multitude of Allah (SWT)’s prophets to their people including Nuh, Hud, Saleh and Shu’aib. Unlike his predecessors who called out to their respective people, Muhammad (SAW) who was sent to the entire world as Allah’s last deputy called out to the entire humanity, “O mankind! Worship your Lord, the One who created you and those who have come before you so you may be saved” (al-Baqarah, 2:21).

After the demise of Muhammad (SAW), we as Muslims, by extension, are commissioned to continue this legacy of conveying to humanity at large the very same message, “You have no other gods besides Allah.” This is the best service one can do to humanity. “You are the best community (ummah) evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:110).

Being prophetic in nature, it is noteworthy to understand that the very objective of Allah (SWT)’s Messengers in the pursuit of dawah is to establish and abide by justice, “Indeed, We had been sending Our messengers with clear signs, the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice” (al-Hadid, 57:25). Therefore, we must always keep in mind and never lose sight of our higher aim and objective of establishing justice while making dawah.

According to the Christian Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10). “Thy kingdom come,” according to bible commentaries, means, “We are to pray that God will hasten Christ's return to establish the literal Kingdom of God on this earth.” In other words, to establish the very purpose messengers of God were sent for i.e. to uphold justice.

It is our understanding that Jesus (AS) will return and establish justice on earth. That does not mean, however, that we are absolved from the responsibility of preaching and promoting the divine principles of an ideal social
system, the concepts of justice and the final Scripture, the Qur’an by which Jesus (AS) will rule with. This is the higher aim and objective of dawah. “O you who believe, stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah” (al-Nisa’, 4:135), and conversely, “O you who believe, stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to justice” (al-Ma’ idah, 5:8)

Therefore, we seek to promote and establish God’s justice and God’s kingdom; a kingdom that will yield peace, joy and prosperity. Allah (SWT) made it very clear, “When guidance comes from Me, as it certainly will, there shall be no fear upon those who follow My guidance nor shall they grieve” (al-Baqarah, 2:38). In other words, people will enjoy happiness from every direction. That can only happen when we uphold the Book of Allah (SWT) and establish the divine law. Otherwise, what use is the Qur’an and what purpose does it serve? Let us not be likened to those whom Allah (SWT) described in surat al-Jumu’ah, “The likeness of those who were entrusted with the Taurat but failed to uphold it, is like a donkey carrying a heap of books. Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the revelations of Allah: and Allah does not guide such unjust people” (al-Jumu’ah, 62:5).

The entire world is engulfed with tragedy and misery. One may conclude, the world’s decadence, corruption, oppression, misery, grief, despair and hopelessness is solely due to turning away from the divine guidance, the Book of Allah (SWT). “Whoever follows My guidance, when it comes to you (O people), will not go astray nor fall into misery, and whoever turns away from My remembrance (guidance), he will then have a miserable life, and We will raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection” (Ta Ha, 20:123,124). Sadly, we have utterly turned a blind eye to the Book of Allah. Just imagine the world under God’s rule.

Therefore, the main objective of dawah is to spread what we consider to be of benefit to humanity and proclaim God’s message of hope to the world. Such an endeavor will inevitably result in resistance. The biggest resistance today comes from anti-Shariah movements and Islamophobes such as Daniel Pipes, Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer among many others. Attacks on Islam, the Qur’an and the Prophet (SAW) are painful to believers, but as conscious Muslims, we need to endure the pain without resorting to violent reactions or tit for tat revenge.

We must be proactive and propagate the truth to the full extent permissible by our constitution under the freedom of speech and freedom of religion clauses. We have a great opportunity to bring awareness to people residing in this country about the Qur’an, its teachings and what Islam is about.

The second objective of dawah is articulated in a couple places in the Qur’an. “Thus, We have made you (O believers) a just (balanced) community, so that you may bear witness (to the truth) before others and so that the Messenger may bear witness over you” (al-Baqarah, 2:143).

An elucidation of the same concept may be found in suratul-hajj, “Do good so you may prosper, and strive hard in (the cause of) Allah with all the struggle that is due to Him. It is He who selected you...so that the messenger be a witness over you and you may bear witness over humanity” (al-Hajj, 22:77, 78).

Not only will we bear testimony over people we currently share the earth with, we are told by the Prophet (SAW) that we will testify against people of previous nations on the Day of Judgment who would deny the fact that their prophets had preached to them. The Prophet (SAW) said, “Nuh and his nation will come (on the Day of Resurrection) and Allah will ask (Nuh), ‘Did you convey (the Message)?’ He will reply, ‘Yes, my Lord!’ Then Allah will ask Nuh’s nation, ‘Did Nuh convey My Message to you?’ They will reply, ‘No, no prophet came to us.’ Then Allah will ask Nuh, ‘Who will stand as a witness for you?’ He will reply, ‘Muhammad and his followers (will stand witness for me).’ So, I and my followers will stand as witnesses for him (that he conveyed Allah’s Message)” (al-Bukhari).

Another reason to engage in dawah is to ensure there will be no argument or proof against us on the Day of Judgment unless we fail to fulfill our mission. Aside from their primary duty of calling people to Allah (SWT), the Messengers gave good news and warned their people, “So that mankind would have no excuse before Allah,
once the messengers had been sent” (al-Nisa’, 4:165). Failing to uphold our responsibility may result in utter disappointment on the grand day of accountability and the blame will be on no one but ourselves.

It was an emotional moment for the Prophet (SAW) when he instructed Abdullah Ibn Masoud (RAA) to recite surat al-Nisa’ to him. When Abdullah reached the ayah, “How (will it be) then, when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Prophet) as a witness against these people?” (al-Nisa’, 4:41). He (SAW) said, “Stop, enough for now.” When Abdullah looked at him he saw his eyes shedding tears. We too must have the same heartfelt feeling toward people who are on the wrong path.

Therefore, the principal purpose of dawah is to guide people to the straight path, “Alif Lam Ra, (this is) a Scripture which We have sent down to you (O Prophet) so that, with their Lord’s permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light, to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy One” (Ibrahim, 14:1). The Qur’an is the only Book that serves as true guidance to humanity for all time to come.

The objectives and efforts of dawah may be summed up in the few but most eloquent words of Ribi’ Ibn ‘Amir, a companion of the Prophet (SAW). As an emissary representing the new faith, he informed the adversaries in Persia, “We have come to take people from the bondage of other people to the servitude of Allah alone, from the narrowness of this life and its misery to its spaciousness and its felicity, and from the corrupt systems and social orders to the justice of Islam.”

The duty of dawah is a trust (amanah). Failing to protect the trust is the same as concealing the truth. Hiding knowledge is tantamount to having Allah (SWT) invoke his curse on us. “Verily, those who conceal the clear proofs, evidences and the guidance, which We have sent down, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, they are the ones cursed by Allah and cursed by the cursers” (al-Baqarah, 2:159). Similarly, the Prophet (SAW) said, “Whoever conceals knowledge which Allah has made beneficial for mankind’s affairs of religion, Allah will brand him with a stamp of fire on the Day of Resurrection” (Ibn Majah).

One must keep in mind that there is no certainty that dawah will yield the desired result. Nuh (AS) preached for 950 years with barely a handful of people accepting his call. His efforts, however, did not go to waste. He will be rewarded for his hard work and pains. Using the techniques and methods at his disposal, he did all he could to influence his people to submit and surrender to Allah (SWT), but to no avail. His beautiful preaching fell on deaf ears. Astonishingly, his own wife and son died as unbelievers.

Just as Nuh (AS) was determined to keep his pledge with Allah (SWT) and continue preaching, the caller or preacher (da’ee), must have a firm resolve, determination, and be willing to sacrifice for the cause of Allah (SWT) and never give up nor give in no matter what the circumstances are and how severe the persecution might be.

An example of firmness in the conduct of affairs is the example of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) when he was offered wealth, women and to be crowned as the King of Makkah by the chieftains of Quraysh on the condition that he ceases his preaching and dawah efforts. The Prophet (SAW) informed his uncle who was mediating, “O my uncle! By Allah, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandon this mission, I would not abandon it until Allah would make me victorious, or I perish therein.” Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah is a great example for all of us. An organized, disciplined and determined group is necessary for this prophetic task.

Motivation should come from passion to serve Allah (SWT) and humanity as well as the many rewards one may reap while fearing Allah (SWT)’s wrath. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, “He who calls others to follow the right guidance will have a reward equal to the reward of those who follow him, without their reward being diminished in any respect on that account. And he who calls others to error (misguidance) will have a sin equal to the sin of those who follow him, without their sin being diminished in any respect on that account” (Muslim).
The Prophet (SAW) informed Ali (RAA), “By Allah, if a single person is guided by Allah through you, it will be better for you than a whole lot of red camels.” (al-Bukhari and Muslim). Indeed this dawah is not a choice, it is a responsibility. Let us convey even one ayah as we carry-on the prophetic tradition of our beloved Prophet (SAW) in calling people to the One true God and enjoining what is right and forbidding evil.